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s. 55,050

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Date: FEB 3 1966

Upon What Does CIA Feed That It Should Become Greater Than All?

Many of those given over to soul rumblings because of spending for national health and education are remarkably quiet regarding the high-spending Central Intelligence Agency.

Those who demand accounting down to the last cent of all other government spending—and they are right in so demanding—suddenly become mute in the face of suggestion that CIA spending be checked now and then.

Somewhere in the new budget, as in each budget since the CIA was instituted, there is a hidden appropriation of at least \$1 billion dollars.

The "at least" qualification is necessary because the general public has no idea of how much CIA is costing or what we're getting in return for the money.

The fact that \$1 billion or more is concealed in the budget is no secret. The way it is hidden is known only to a handful of veteran legislators.

For 20 years the CIA has been permitted to operate high, wide and handsome without a review by Congressional investigators.

Almost every year legislation has been introduced to review the activities and spending of CIA, but to no avail. Hitherto, CIA spokesmen have been able to hold off such a probe.

They argue that CIA is a fact-finding agency and that it has no policy-making powers. To quote Sen. Saltonstall, one CIA champion:

"The agency provides information to the military services and the National Security Council for decision-making.

The 'guerrilla warfare' activities are undertaken by CIA on orders from higher authority. CIA is assigned them because no other government agency is set up for such tasks."

He holds that "our friends and allies would be antagonized and the lives of brave men would be jeopardized if CIA had to come out in the open. We would lose the benefit of the exchange of information we now have with allied states."

Those who seek a little more light on CIA spending deny trying to force CIA to "come out into the open" insofar as its necessarily secret operations or contacts with other countries are concerned.

Senator Eugene McCarthy is sponsor of a bill setting up a select Senate investigative unit to make the first review of CIA in its history. This group would report back at the end of next January with conclusions and recommendations for overhaul.

For one thing, it is contended Congress must check on the validity of rumors about CIA involvement in activities far beyond the original scope of the agency and, on occasion, more hurtful than helpful to security of the United States.

The danger is that CIA has fed so long at its secret table that it feels it is above and beyond the survey or control of Congress, the President and the people. A Congressional review, conducted with due regard to essential security, is long overdue.